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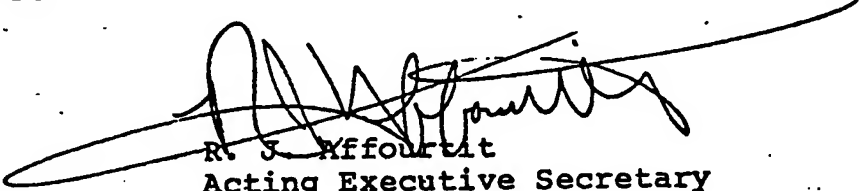
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MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

Attached for your information is the Chief of Staff,
USAF, General Charles A. Gabriel's report of his trip to
Peru, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Honduras and El Salvador,
on May 6-18, 1984.


R. J. Ruffolo
Acting Executive Secretary

Attachment
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12 JUN 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Latin American Visit (U)

(U) This memorandum is a summary of key issues and conclusions from my visit to Peru, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Honduras and El Salvador, May 6-18, 1984. The trip was made in conjunction with the Twenty-Fourth Conference of the Chiefs of the American Air Forces (CONJEFAMER XXIV) held in Quito, Ecuador.

PERU: (C) The Peruvian Air Force is operating aircraft from nine different countries of origin, with the majority of their combat equipment being Soviet. The Peruvians have developed an impressive aircraft maintenance capability which now permits them to perform major overhauls on virtually all their aircraft, including those from the USSR. The senior Peruvian Air Force leaders are very eager to maintain and enhance contacts with the United States. However, if we ever intend to decrease their dependence on the Soviet Union, we will have to develop a better, more realistic plan than our efforts to date. Also, both American and Peruvian officials voiced concern over the growing terrorist (Sendero Luminoso) situation and its possible linkage to drug traffickers. This latter point came up in my discussions with each and every one of my Latin American counterparts. There is considerable interest in improving air defense detection capabilities as well as in exchanging intelligence information on drug traffickers.

ARGENTINA: (S) The Argentine Air Force is clearly supportive of the new democratic government and is striving to develop a harmonious and workable relationship with the newly created Ministry of Defense which has virtually no experience in conducting defense matters. I met with Minister Borras and the Argentine equivalent of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army, General Fernandez-Torres. I also spent considerable time with the Under Secretary of Defense, Doctor Jaunarena and we had very positive discussions on the civilian-military relationship.

(S) The Argentine Air Force is very proud of its performance during the South Atlantic Conflict of 1982. There is still considerable resentment among the young pilots towards the United States because of the support, most notable the AIM-9L missiles, which we provided the British. While I was repeatedly assured that Argentina had no hostile intentions toward the UK forces on the Falkland/Malvinas Islands, the Argentine Air Force needs to acquire replacement aircraft for their current inventory of old aircraft. The Argentines are now developing what appears to be a politically,

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economically and militarily feasible plan for the phased acquisition of spare parts (to maintain what they now have) and A-4M aircraft (to replace older aircraft which they would dispose of). The Argentines fully understand that this or any other defense expenditure must have the approval of the Ministry of Defense before the US can act on it.

CHILE: (C) The Chilean Air Force is most professional and very well led. It is developing its own aeronautical industry, currently producing a basic trainer aircraft (PILLAN) with the Piper Company and assembling a jet trainer in conjunction with Spain (CASA-101). However, the Chileans face serious problems in the area of spare parts and safety related items, such as ejection seat cartridges, for US manufactured aircraft. A concerted effort should be undertaken to make life support/safety of flight items available to Chile in the immediate future. They offered to discuss our use of Easter Island if it would be of benefit to the United States.

ECUADOR: (C) The Ecuadoran Air Force did an excellent job of organizing and conducting CONJEFAMER XXIV. This annual meeting afforded all hemispheric air force leaders the opportunity to get to know each other better while seeking solutions to common professional problems such as search and rescue, accident prevention, telecommunications, etc. Nicaragua attended the conference but did not take an active role in any of the formal discussions. Informally, I was able to detect considerable resentment toward the Sandinistas, especially in light of the recent shooting down of the Honduran helicopter.

HONDURAS: (C) During an hour-long meeting with President Suazo, he expressed concern about the rising US interest rates and their impact on the smaller countries. He was also very concerned about Nicaragua, especially that country's forthcoming elections; he believes the results might give credibility to the Marxist regime. While he has a deep respect for President Reagan, he expressed concern over US resolve in the region.

EL SALVADOR: (C) A feeling of cautious optimism seemed to prevail following the 6 May presidential elections. We need to project a more positive image of what is happening in El Salvador and the progress that is taking place there.


CHARLES A. GABRIEL General, USAF
Chief of Staff